A
NARRATIVE

Of what paſſed between

General Sir HARRY ERSKINE

And PHILIP THICKNESSE, Eſq;

[Price One Shilling.]

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Of what paſſed between

General Sir HARRY ERSKINE

And PHILIP THICKNESSE, Eſq;

In conſequence of a

LETTER written by the latter to the

EARL of B——,

Relative to the Publication of ſome

ORIGINAL LETTERS and POETRY

OF

Lady MARY WORTLEY MONTAGUE's,

Then in Mr. THICKNESSE's Poſſeſſion.

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M DCC LXVI.

A

NARRATIVE, &c.

NOtwithſtanding the unpopularity of the earl of B—— as a miniſter, at the time I wrote his lordſhip the letter, which is the foundation of this narrative; I had often been aſſured, by men who had it in their power to know, and in their capacity to perceive, that in private life his lordſhip is a man of a moſt aimable character: that he is a promoter of literature, an encourager of arts; and for the œconomy and regularity of his family, and domeſtic concerns, that he holds forth an example worthy of the notice and practice of all

people in the higheſt ſtations, or of the greateſt poſſeſſions. That he is a good father, a good huſband, and a noble and generous friend to thoſe who have, or to thoſe who are willing to ſerve or oblige him. Convinced as I was of theſe truths, I loſt the favour of a powerful friend, by exerting my feeble, but well meant pen, in defence of his lordſhip's conduct in ſeveral periodical papers: and that at a time too (ſuch was the violence of party) that it was ſcarce ſafe to have mentioned his lordſhip's name with any degree of reſpect in a mixt company. I mean at the time that the papers, under the title of the *North Briton:* and on the very Saturday that the public were firſt diſappointed of that much coveted paper, I put forth a North Briton Extraordinary; that, however ill it were wrote, was certainly not ill meant with reſpect to his lordſhip; and this I did in ſuch a manner, that though it did offend my friends who knew the author, it could gain me no favour from his lordſhip, who to this day knows him not. Thus far I acted from an innate averſion, to ſee a man hunted

down

down whom I thought poſſeſſed of rare accompliſhments, and who had too much virtue, (for ſuch placed pride is virtue) to buy the general applauſe of court ſycophants and flatterers, as I fear is too often the caſe, by the meaneſt and moſt hypocritical conduct that can debaſe human nature.

Whether I have any cauſe now to think otherwiſe, it does not become me to determine; but I am determined to relate without FEAR, in the moſt open and undiſguiſed manner I am able, what paſſed between me and Sir Harry Erſkine, in conſequence of a letter I wrote to the earl of B——.

But previous thereto, I muſt make a little digreſſion, and honeſtly own, that by writing this letter to his lordſhip, I had much ſelf intereſt at heart; and much reaſon to believe that the incident which follows; an incident in appearance ſo fortunate, and indeed ſo unexpected, was a providential interpoſition to ſave myſelf and my family from what my friends then thought inevitable ruin.

At this time I was under a moſt ſevere and expenſive proſecution, I had almoſt ſaid perſecution, for libeling lord ——— by ſending his lordſhip a preſent of a WOODEN GUN, &c. This gentleman's reſentment proved as boundleſs as his fortune, which was exerted in its fulleſt extent, to load me with every expence and embarraſſment, that a legal proceeding in the moſt expenſive court of law could put me to. The whole offence I was guilty of is too well known, and the puniſhment both in purſe and perſon I received, is too ſeverely felt by me, as it will by my family after me, ever to be forgot, or ſcarce to be forgiven. Therefore I will drop this painful ſubject, with inſerting a copy of an unſucceſsful letter I ſent to lord Orwell ſome time before he was pleaſed to bring me to the bar of the King's Bench, as it is in ſome meaſure connected with the following narrative.

My

My Lord,

" I ſhould have taken this method of addreſſing your Lordſhip much ſooner, had I not depended (I now find too much) on the promiſe of ſome powerful friends, to uſe their utmoſt endeavours to put an end to a difference that, I hope, aroſe from faults on both ſides; but which, I am ſenſible, has far exceeded the bounds of decency on mine.

Thoſe who are quick in anger, are often led into indiſcretions they become ſorry for. I am not aſhamed to ſay this is my caſe; and therefore, I flatter myſelf your Lordſhip will conſider the very great expence, and the painful ſuſpence, of a proſecution of near a year's ſtanding, and which has already exceeded more than my whole year's income, to be a ſufficient puniſhment to me; and a ſufficient reaſon to your Lordſhip, not to carry this matter any farther. Your Lordſhip has a manifeſt advantage over me; by waving which, you muſt either for ever lay me under an obligation to behave towards you, as to one I muſt think myſelf obliged to in ſo doing; or, I muſt for ever lie under the imputation of acting contrary to ſenſe, decency, and gratitude.

tude. I Profeſs my deſire is (excluſive of the conſequences of this proſecution) to be laid under that obligation; and, as it has been my caſe to offend againſt the laws of my country in general, and againſt your Lordſhip in particular, it may be yours to forget and to forgive the latter, that I may appear in court, with a better grace, to receive the judgment due to the former. I have the honour to be your lordſhip's moſt obedient, and wiſh to be your moſt obliged humble ſervant,

P. THICKNESSE."

About the time that I repaired to town to receive the judgment of the court of King's Bench, a friend of mine, who had lived in an intimate and friendly correſpondence with Lady Mary Wortely Montagu many years, and who was then a going abroad, put into my hands ſeveral original letters, and pieces of poetry of her ladyſhip's, with permiſſion to publiſh them.

The pleaſure which the public had received from the three volumes of her ladyſhip's letters, juſt before publiſhed, left me no room to doubt but that theſe were a very

very lucrative preſent to me, as well as a very acceptable entertainment for the polite world. I began to comfort myſelf with the reflection that theſe papers, which were enough to add a fourth and fifth volume to her ladyſhip's works, would in ſome part at leaſt bear me up againſt the very heavy expence of my proſecution, in which an innocent printer, and an honeſt and faithful ſervant were equally involved with me, and which neither were able to ſupport themſelves, and conſequently fell on me. With this view I ſet them to the preſs, and the firſt ſheets were actually printed off, when it occurred to me upon reading over her ladyſhip's letters, &c. with a *nice attention*, that a publication thereof might prove very diſagreeable to the earl of B—— and his family; and that by laying the matter before his lordſhip, I might, by ſuppreſſing them, if he deſired it, procure his all-powerful aſſiſtance to effect that favour from lord ——— that NOW it is my greateſt happineſs I did not receive from ſuch a man; and this it was that determined me, rather to rely upon the GREAT

uncertainty

uncertainty of lord B—— generoſity and good offices, than upon the LITTLE certainty of a few hundred pounds, which the publication of them muſt have put into my pocket.

The public were told by the editor of lady Mary's letters, already publiſhed, that they were originally deſigned by her ladyſhip for publication. I have the beſt authority to ſay, thoſe in my poſſeſſion were never deſigned for the public eye, and therefore were much more likely to excite the curioſity of the diſcerning and ſenſible part of the world. One letter written to an intimate and beloved friend, betrays more of the REAL way of thinking of the author, than a thouſand dreſſed up letters deſigned for publication; the latter is generally *bedizened* with the falſe lure of an harlot's paint and apparel, while the former diſcovers the overflowings of an undiſguiſed heart; I therefore put a ſtop to the preſs, and wrote the earl of B—— the following letter.

My

My Lord,

"A perſon for whom lady Mary Wortley Montagu had a very particular friendſhip, and with whom her ladyſhip correſponded many years, has put into my hands a parcel of her ladyſhip's letters and poetry, with permiſſion to publiſh them; to add to thoſe letters which have already afforded the public ſo much entertainment. This ſtep, however, I do not think proper to take, without previouſly acquainting your lordſhip therewith, being told that the editor of the other three volumes did not publiſh them without your lordſhip's permiſſion; and therefore I am unwilling to fall ſhort of that attention which is due to your lordſhip in a publication of ſo much delicacy.

I have the honour to be, &c."

This letter was ſent to his lordſhip in Bedfordſhire; and in a very ſhort time after I received a card from general Sir Harry Erſkine, deſiring to ſee me as ſoon as poſ-

ſible, I accordingly waited upon him the ſame evening; he was not at home, but had given directions to be ſent for if I came during his abſence.

Sir Harry received me with a moſt chearful and open countenance, and told me that lord B—— deſired him to acknowledge a very polite letter he had received from me, and that his lordſhip conſidered it an act of good breeding, and an attention to him that he would not overlook, that the publication of private letters could not prove agreeable to any family; and that lady Mary's former letters had been publiſhed very contrary to his lordſhip's *real* diſpoſition. Sir Harry, after many civilities that great men ſhew to little ones, while they have a point to carry, further told me (what I really believed) that lord B—— never forgot the moſt trivial ſervices, and that he himſelf had experienced his generoſity and friendſhip in an high degree; that it was his way to ſpeak his mind without reſerve, and then falling in his voice, and raiſing his ſhoulders with an irreſiſtible addreſs,

ſhewed

ſhewed me in what manner I might approach lord B——, and humbly preſent him with all the manuſcript papers in my poſſeſſion, I replied, that though I had my friend's permiſſion to publiſh theſe papers, I had not a power to deliver up the originals to any perſon living, and therefore that was what I could not, nor would do, adding, that it was my way alſo to be open and ſpeak my mind; and therefore begged the favour of knowing why lord B—— had refered this matter to him? Sir Harry replied, that lord B—— ſuppoſed we ſoldiers all knew one another; and ſo ſaid he you ſee it happened, for you know my regiment had the *honour* to be under your command at Land Guard Fort. This circumſtance gave me a fair opportunity of mentioning my caſe to Sir Harry, which I had before vainly flattered myſelf I might have found means to have ſaid to lord B—— himſelf. I obſerved then to Sir Harry, that though it was true we ſoldiers all knew one another; the great ones did not ALL know the many hardſhips and oppreſſions ſome of us little ones lay under;

and therefore desired his permission to inform him with some particulars relative to myself, and some grievous difficulties I was involved in, that originally arose from my doing my duty with propriety as a soldier, and with decency as a subject. Sir Harry was pleased patiently to hear the origin of my quarrel with lord —— with all the provocations given on both sides, *down* to my sending his lordship the WOODEN GUN, which in the course of the prosecution against me his lordship is pleased to say, *was sent to reflect upon his courage as an officer*; and I concluded by humbly desiring, that lord B—— would do me the favour to put a stop to a prosecution so grievous to myself, and so detrimental to my large family: and at the same time I gave my word to Sir Harry, that the letters should not directly nor indirectly be published; though Sir Harry was far from being pleased, and much surprized with my refusal, to deliver the letters up to the earl of B——, and much of his openness was that minute shut up; yet he assured me he would not sleep till he had seen counsellor W———h,

and

and other great men of the law, and immediately ordered his chariot for that purpoſe, aſſuring me I ſhould hear from him very ſoon; and in a day or two I received the following note from him.

Sir Harry Erſkine preſents his compliments to Capt. Thickneſſe, and has the *honour* to inform him, that the paſſing ſentence is deferred till the laſt day of term; and that he has applied to *ſome gentlemen* to endeavour to prevail with lord ——— to put a ſtop to the proceedings; but as he underſtands his lordſhip is much irritated, he very much doubts the ſucceſs.

Cavendiſh Square, Nov. 22.

Soon after this I took the liberty to write again to lord B——, aſſuring his lordſhip that the letters ſhould not be publiſhed; and in that letter I preſumed to lay before his lordſhip a ſhort ſtate of the caſe, reſpecting my diſpute with lord ——— and humbly deſired his lordſhip's interpoſition in my behalf. Not many days were paſt before I was again deſired to attend Sir

Harry

Harry Erſkine, when he was pleaſed to double down a letter which he had received from lord B——, and deſired me to read that part which related to myſelf; the purport of which was, " *Tell Mr. Thickneſſe I* " *am ſorry for his very hard caſe: but if I* " *was to appear to ſerve him, I ſhould do his* " *cauſe a diſſervice.*"

Sir Harry, however, aſſured me *he* would do every thing he could; and again ſtrongly recommended to me to deliver up lady Mary's letters to lord B——; this I abſolutely refuſed, but told him I would write to my friend, and endeavour to obtain permiſſion ſo to do; and as a proof that my friend was abroad, and that I did not make uſe of any artful pretence, or falſe colouring to avoid it, I took out of my pocket a letter I had juſt received from that perſon in France, and read the greateſt part thereof to Sir Harry. As there was ſomething very original, and ſtrikingly clever in the ſtile of this letter, Sir Harry very juſtly obſerved, that it was probable my friend had himſelf made ſome figure in the

the republick of letters, and aſked me what part of France *he* was in? Here I muſt make a ſacrifice of the inſufficiency of my head to the unſuſpiciouſneſs of my heart; for I very openly replied at Voréé, thirty leagues from Paris, upon a viſit to the celebrated Monſ. Helvetius.

" Aye,—an Engliſhman of letters now upon a viſit to Monſ. Helvetius at Voréé"—Who can that be? I cannot tell—but every body at Paris muſt know. Something like this I thought I perceived in Sir Harry's thoughtful face; he appeared then in a *hurry* to go out; and I having perceived my fool's bolt was ſhot, had no deſire to ſtay after this. I heard nothing from Sir Harry for near a *month*, and then he did *me* the honour of a viſit, and informed *me* he had been *ill*; and that having no *good news* to communicate, he had avoided giving me the trouble of coming to him.

Mr. Helvetius HAD NOT been honoured all the winter with the viſit of any Engliſh gentlemen

gentlemen whatever; *every body at Paris* knew that: but no body knew that an Engliſh lady of ſome erudition had been there ſome time; ſo that, if any enquiry was made in the time of Sir Harry's *illneſs*; a lady might be overlooked during the *confuſion* of his *diſorder*, and upon his *recovery*, a ſurmize might ariſe that ſomething might be pretended to be in the poſſeſſion of ſome body that in reality no body had; a doubt that might naturally ariſe in Sir Harry's breaſt, from my abſolute refuſal to deliver up Lady Mary's letters to the earl of B——.

During this very reſerved and ſuſpicious viſit, Sir Harry aſked me in what manner lady Mary uſually *ſigned her name?* I replied, that moſt of her ladyſhip's letters were without any ſignature whatever; none with her name at length, and a few only with the three initial letters M. W. M. He then juſt intimated the curioſity he had to ſee her ladyſhip's *hand writing*. I who had ſeen my former error too late, was ready prepared for this buſineſs, which I had

had long ſuſpected would be the caſe, and therefore I had put into my pocket-book one of lady Mary's letters, ſo ambiguouſly worded, that no man living could diſcover certainly whether it was addreſſed to a gentleman or to a lady, but from ſome marked words in it, it was moſt natural to conclude it was to a *male* correſpondent: however, be that as it may, I perceived my credit began to ariſe with Sir Harry, who *then* aſked me, Whether I ſhould like an employment in my own way in America? I told him, I ſhould not: that military governors THERE, lived up to their chins in hot water, but that we little ones HERE, only up to our waiſts: that I had a very large family, and was determined to remain in my preſent ſtation, if I could not obtain his majeſty's leave to ſell what I had in part bought, and what I had ſerved for, not only in America, but in almoſt every part of the globe, for upwards of twenty-ſeven years: that I was then in treaty with a gentleman, in whoſe favour, I hoped, by his majeſty's indulgence, to obtain leave to reſign.

In a day or two after this interview with Sir Harry, I was honoured with a visit from captain Pitcairn, a captain of marines on half pay; he told me he had heard I was willing to resign Land Guard Fort, and desired to treat with me upon that subject. As my *abode* was necessarily at that time unknown but to my intimate acquaintance, I asked Mr. Pitcairn, to whom I was obliged for the favour he then did me; he told me Sir Harry Erskine, and that it would be very agreeable to Sir Harry, lord H——, and lord B—, if I would exchange upon certain conditions with him. I repeated to him what I had before said to Sir Harry, and told him that I was both in honour and inclination engaged in a treaty on that subject with another; yet after this, Sir Harry strongly recommended to me, to transact this matter with captain Pitcairn, and assured me lord H—— had a particular regard and friendship for him; and Mr. Pitcairn, not thinking my former refusal *quite satisfactory*, honoured me with a letter soon after, again urging me to treat with him. Sir Harry's

correſpondence and viſits on my ſide, however did not drop; but I was ever after received ſtanding, with a profound conſequential look, and many obſcure intimation of the great difficulty I ſhould meet with in tranſacting the buſineſs of reſigning in favour of any man but captain Pitcairn, and ſo indeed it at that time proved.

I cannot, however, blame Sir Harry for his late ſhyneſs; I had refuſed to deliver up the letters to the earl of B——; I had refuſed to give up my bread for a marine captain's half pay, and I had objected to *ſomething* being done for me in America, whereby I might have eſcaped three months reſidence in the King's Bench Priſon! Indeed, I had given my word that the letters ſhould not be publiſhed, and I have hitherto faithfully kept it. Soon after this, I had the honour of the following letter from Sir Harry.

" Sir,

" Allow me to acquaint you, that it is neceſſary for you, as ſoon as you receive this,

to keep out of the way, or to remain concealed till the end of the term, as by that means the prosecutor cannot serve the summons or writ upon you, in which case, he cannot proceed till next term, and thus we shall have time to employ friends to put a final stop to the prosecution by their intercession. I am, Sir, &c.

H. ERSKINE."

I would not become a voluntary prisoner, and therefore I went out as usual, but observed Sir Harry's advice with respect to my non-appearance in Westminster-hall, whereby I was kept in London three months longer from my family, at a very great expence, both as to law as well as to domestick matters: and a day or two before the end of the following term, I received a letter from my friend in France, absolutely forbidding *my publishing lady Mary's letters*, and desiring me to deliver them up to her daughter, and at *the same time*, a card from Sir Harry, that all his good offices to serve me had failed: so I repaired the next morning to Westminster-hall, from whence I

was

was removed to the King's Bench Priſon, for three months longer, becauſe lord B— and Sir Harry Erſkine had not intereſt enough with a *lord of trade*, and the Lord knows what beſide, to drop a proſecution that had then coſt me five hundred pounds, beſides much vexation on my part, and I believe a little even to *colonel* lord Orwell.

Here I may juſtly be allowed, I hope, to obſerve, that if I had not wrote my firſt letter to lord B—, which certainly was civilly meant, and not rudely expreſſed, I had not deprived myſelf and my family of ſome hundred pounds that the publication might have produced me, nor had I delayed another term from receiving judgment, a delay, which coſt me more than a hundred pounds extraordinary, nor ſhould I have had a printer to pay for the firſt now, uſeleſs ſheets, being printed off; nor a ſtationer for the paper, &c. &c. Theſe very material conſiderations emboldened me again to write to the Earl of B—, even from the King's Bench Priſon, and I humbly laid this matter before his lordſhip for his ſerious con-

consideration, and earnestly entreated him to procure a remission of my fine of a hundred pounds, which being to the king, I flattered myself that any friend who had it in their power to lay my case (which was universally thought an hard one) before his majesty, that remission might have been obtained: but from that day to this, I never had any *direct* notice taken of me, my cause or my case, by either lord B— or Sir Harry Erskine: indeed a gentleman in a considerable employment under the government, did call upon a bookseller with whom I sometimes deal, and asked him when the other volumes of lady Mary Wortley Montague's letters *(which he said he had seen advertised)* would be published?

Who sent this gentleman to make that enquiry, I cannot say; but I can certainly say that no man living, besides himself, ever saw the *advertisement* he referred to: it was not indeed very unlikely for a courtier to apprehend, under such circumstances as mine was, in every respect, that a man might be tempted to break his word, nay, to *refuse*

to

to deliver up papers in his ſafe cuſtody, even to the proper owner, ſuch faithleſs things have been done, and may again: but tho' I did deliver up the original letters as I was directed, yet I did not omit taking a copy of ſuch entertaining epiſtles, &c. and I hope the following letter and ſpecimen of her ladyſhip's poetry, will not be deemed any breach of my word, having added them to this dry, unentertaining, ſelfiſh narrative, as the only recompence to the reader it is in my power to make: but I can with truth ſay, I delivered them up to Miſs Forreſter, the daughter of the lady who put them into my hands, and I can alſo with truth and pleaſure ſay, that this young lady did very ſoon after obtain a conſiderable penſion *from the crown*, but I muſt at the ſame time own, that ſhe is the daughter of the late colonel Forreſter, governor of Belliſle, a North-Briton, and author of the Polite Philoſohper.

Swift ſomewhere ſays, he never knew a man that could not bear the misfortunes of another perfectly like a Chriſtian; I therefore hope no one will be *afflicted too much* upon

upon my account, in consequence of the above relation: I do not feel it much myself now I have spilt it upon paper; and I shall always have a satisfaction, that even lord Bute cannot deprive me of, namely, that I had rather he should have so served me, than I him.

Felixton Cottage, May 7, 1765. PHILIP THICKNESSE.

Letter from Lady Mary W. Montague, to Miss ——.

" My dear Girl,

I have so violent a cold, that I never was less qualified in my life for inspecting the heavenly bodies, and must content myself with the vulgar warmth of my dressing-room fire, to a corner of which I shall be confined all this evening, and very glad to see you, if you can attend me any time after your more learned employment.

If the moon is inhabited by mortals like us, and the most important transactions among

among them, are nothing more than kingdoms turned into common wealths, and common wealths into kingdoms, and theſe mighty events are produced there, as they are here, by tyrany or luſt: I have no deſire of being acquainted with its inhabitants, but can look down upon them, as they do upon us: I have peeped behind the ſcenes here, more than contributes to my eaſe, and by examining the wires and mechaniſm of the ſhew, the entertainment has long ſince ceaſed: Who is any longer entertained with a hocus pocus man, when he knows how the tricks are performed? In ſhort, my dear girl, our moſt pleaſing purſuits become carrion by the time they are hunted down; I would not put you out of conceit with a world you are but juſt beginning to enter into; but to prepare you to bear thoſe diſappointments common to all, but moſt ſeverely felt by thoſe of your caſt and mine, for I would willingly tack myſelf to any thing that is half ſo good as I know you to be, and wiſh myſelf.

To CLIO.

Occaſioned by her Verſes on FRIENDSHIP.

While, Clio, pondering o'er thy lines I roll,
Dwell on each thought, and meditate thy ſoul,
Methinks I view thee, in ſome calm retreat,
Far from all guilt, diſtraction and deceit;
Thence pitying view, the thoughleſs fair and gay,
Who whirl their lives in giddineſs away.
Thence greatly ſcorning what the world calls great,
Contemn the proud, their tumults, power and ſtate.
And deem it thence, inglorious to deſcend
For ought below, but virtue and a friend.
How com'ſt thou fram'd, ſo different from thy ſex,
Whom trifles raviſh, and whom trifles vex?
Capricious things, all flutter, whim and ſhow,
And light and varying as the winds that blow.
To candour, ſenſe, to love, to friendſhip blind,
To flatterers fools, and coxcombs only kind!
Say whence thoſe hints, thoſe bright ideas came,
That warm thy breaſt with friendſhip's holy flame?
That cloſe thy heart againſt the joys of youth,
And ope thy mind to all the rays of truth,

That

That with ſuch ſweetneſs and ſuch grace unite,
The gay, the prudent, virtuous, and polite.
As heaven inſpires thy ſentiment divine,
May heaven vouchſafe a friendſhip worthy thine:
A friendſhip, plac'd where eaſe and fragrance reign,
Where nature ſways us, and no laws reſtrain.
Where ſtudious leiſure, proſpects unconfin'd,
And heavenly muſing, lifts the aſpiring mind.
There with thy friend, may years on years be ſpent,
In blooming health, and ever gay, content;
There blend your cares with ſoft aſſuaſive arts,
There ſooth the paſſions, there unfold your hearts;
Join in each wiſh, and warming into love,
Approach the raptures of the bleſt above.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 2. line 14. Inſtead of reading, "I mean at the time of "the papers under the title of the North-Briton," read, "At "the time of the publication of the papers under the title of "the North-Briton." P. 15. l. 16. Place the period after the word ſtay. inſtead of the word this.